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1 April 1953

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Deputy Director (Administration)

SUBJECT: Informal Comments on the Professional Selection Panel and the Career Service Program

1. This memorandum contains my gratuitous and strictly personal observations on the Professional Selection Panel and the Career Service Program of the Agency. My brief exposure to this very complicated Agency problem is probably too superficial to warrant unverified acceptance of these views. Nevertheless, I feel that I should call to your attention my opinion that the career service concept seems to be in great need of either reaffirmation or possibly redirection.

2. For several weeks, I attended the weekly meetings of the Professional Selection Panel either in the capacity of the DDA representative or merely as a standby alternate. It is my observation that the Panel is performing the following functions:

a. It is reviewing from one to three applicant cases each week with a view to making a positive recommendation as to whether or not a given individual is a good prospect for long range employment by CIA.

b. It is acting as a study group to consider specific problems referred to it by the Career Service Board or the DDA. (Possibly in his capacity as Chairman of the Career Service Board.)

3. In the first of these capacities, the Professional Selection Panel, in my opinion, is a frightful waste of time and money. This extremely adverse reaction is no reflection upon the members of the panel or upon the basic concept under which the selection panel was originally established. The simple facts are these:

a. CIA at the present time has neither a developed Career Service concept nor a program to foster and nurture such a concept. Consequently, the so-called Professional Selection Panel has no valid basis for the establishment of selection criteria and is merely passing upon the suitability for employment of a pitifully small number of individuals.

b. The only cases presented to the Professional Selection Panel are those of applicants which are referred to the Panel by the Personnel Office, Medical Office, Training, Security or the employing office. Referral normally takes place only when one of the referring offices feels that it has encountered a borderline case which barely meets CIA standards of employment in one respect or another. Usually, one of the referring offices feels that it has detected defects in character, outlook, or personality which should perhaps disqualify the applicant even though he meets the more measurable requirements of employment. The Panel, consisting

of five relatively senior officials of the Agency, and assisted by from five to seven alternates and advisors, makes nothing but a simple objective determination that the individual would or would not be a good selection risk as a long range employee.

4. The fallacy in this elaborate process is obvious. In the first place, I feel that the referring office together with a trained personnel official would jointly arrive at the identical conclusions reached by the Selection Panel if they reviewed the same facts and information. This conclusion is supported by the fact that the vote taken by the Panel is nearly always unanimous. I do not think that such unanimity is brought about by any cross-fertilization of views resulting from panel discussions but represents merely the common sense conclusions of five individuals reached after review of the same facts. In other words, the Agency appears to be wasting the time of many officials in order to backstop the opinions of officials who should be properly responsible for passing upon the basic suitability of applicants for CIA employment. To the extent that this is necessary, it substantiates my conviction that the Agency has not yet developed a career service concept of sufficient clarity to permit its development even in routine employment processes.

5. With regard to the study group activities of the Professional Selection Panel, I can only state that some of the members and alternates are sincerely and earnestly struggling to develop a career service concept and program. Others appear to be either confused or to be strongly opposed to the concept. There is, obviously, one determination which must be made before any constructive work can come from the Panel. It appears that when General Smith approved the initial Career Service Study, he contemplated the selection and identification by some means or another of those Agency employees who would constitute the Career Service and about whom the Career Service Program would be centered. This sorting and identification of careerists from non-careerists seems to be essential in order:

a. To develop standards and criteria for the use in selecting individuals for the Career Service.

b. To create an identifiable and manageable group for the training, evaluation, placement and rotation programs which are inherent in a long range career program.

6. It now appears, however, that not only has no action been taken to actually establish and define a career group, but apparently many top officials are opposed to this approach to the problem. A determination, therefore, must be made in this respect before any constructive implementing action can be taken.

7. Practically, the Agency is faced with the following alternatives in its desire to improve the calibre of its personnel and to minimize attrition:


a. To consider all employees as careerists and to strengthen and bolster its overall employee selection, training and other policies insofar as practical to attain the desired objectives.

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b. To create an identifiable career service group and thereby concentrate its selection, training and development programs with greater refinement and effectiveness.

Unless the latter alternative is determined upon, I see little value in the function of the Professional Selection Panel and in many of the studies being undertaken at the present time. Instead our time and attention should be devoted to improving the over-all effectiveness of the many facets of a general personnel program.

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Special Assistant to the
Deputy Director (Admin.)

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